

Interview with a Vampire: Inside CBS' Bloody-fun *Moonlight*

On Friday nights this season, after Jennifer Love Hewitt gets done talking to ghosts, CBS is segueing into vampires. In *Moonlight* (premiering tonight at 9 pm/ET), Aussie hunk Alex O'Loughlin plays Mick St. John, a private investigator whose bite, in theory, is in fact far worse than his bark. Not that Mick is that guy. No, he feeds his hunger for the red stuff with black-market bags of O-positive and what-have-you. (Alas, his associate, played by *Veronica Mars'* Jason Dohring, is not so conscientious, and prefers the arm of the nearest lithe lass.) TVGuide.com invited O'Loughlin to give us some (gentle...) sound bites. TVGuide.com: On paper, the critics have noted that the vampire PI TV show is a road well traveled. What will set your show apart?



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TVGuide.com: On paper, the critics have noted that the vampire PI TV show is a road well traveled. What will set your show apart?

Alex O'Loughlin: First of all, our show is only vampires. We don't deal with other monsters like trolls and goblins and stuff. We're not based in some medieval book of curses; we're set in contemporary times. And our vampires, they walk among us, live among us, work among us. They're lawyers and doctors.... We're trying to bring it into the here and now. The other thing is, I don't think I've seen a vampire series done in a film-noir style, not just in the way it's shot but in the use of devices we have, like flashbacks and voiceovers.

TVGuide.com: I like the sort of "interview with a vampire" that leads off the

pilot, where Mick lays out the particular set of rules this show will play by.

O'Loughlin: Yeah, I like that, too. That's actually something we shot in like one afternoon. I was in the makeup chair and they handed me a fistful of pages and said, "We're going to shoot this in an hour and a half."

TVGuide.com: The rule set, though, is the kind of thing people will pick on. "Experts" will say, "Hey, vampires can't do this, and they can do that...." But this establishes the parameters from the start.

O'Loughlin: I really enjoy the way the writers did that. It's a cool device. It's a fantasy for Mick, like "If I were to be interviewed, this is what I would say." It fit in really well.

TVGuide.com: In the pilot, Mick investigates a vampirelike cult. Will his cases always have some gothic theme?

O'Loughlin: The first few cases we come across do have a gothic theme, and there often seems to be an involvement with other vampires. But we absolutely will move away from that — and then come back to it as well. The reason Mick became a PI in the first place is because he feels on a deep level that the more predators he gets rid of and the more crimes against humanity he solves, the further away he'll get from the predator he actually is. Even though he would never admit it, and he never shows it, he is a true victim of circumstance.

TVGuide.com: You're Australian, your leading lady Sophia Miles is British.... Is this something the American Screen Actors Guild should start investigating?

O'Loughlin: [Laughs]

TVGuide.com: Or should American actors get on a plane and take over *Torchwood* and *Summer Heights High*?

O'Loughlin: I often get asked these questions and the reality is that this is where our industry thrives. The mecca of filmmaking in the world just so happens to be in America. It's quite simply a case of us just going where the work is.

TVGuide.com: So Jason Dohring wasn't added to the cast simply to keep the INS at bay?

O'Loughlin: Now, that *is* true. We got him to keep the INS dogs away. It keeps the books clean.

TVGuide.com: Recasting Mick's vampire confidant with Jason is just one of several changes *Moonlight* has undergone since the original pilot. How can you sum up the overall shift in the show?

O'Loughlin: Well, since *Twilight*, as the show used to be called, the whole cast is now a little bit younger. The character of [Mick's ex-wife] Coraline is younger, and Josef (played by Dohring) is a lot younger. The actor playing Josef originally was twice Jason's age, and he was a wonderful actor who I had a great relationship with. What I think happened was the creators and the network made the decision that that particular relationship is extremely important because they're almost each other's only ally, and it was a concern that he was more a father figure to me when Josef was much older, and that there would thus be a level of ease in that age difference. In hindsight, I think they were right to make that change.

TVGuide.com: Yeah, it's perhaps more interesting to have Josef be a younger kind of smartass.

O'Loughlin: Right. Because we're basically the same age bracket, it's like two young rams. There will always be a butting of heads, girls can be a problem.... They're two alpha males, and occasionally, even though they love each other deeply, anything can happen. Things can come up and they'll want to f--king kill each other.

TVGuide.com: There's obviously great chemistry between Mick and Beth, the investigative reporter he collaborates with. But am I to infer from a flashback in the pilot that perhaps they are not destined to be together?

O'Loughlin: Absolutely. That's one of the cruxes of the show. Part of me thinks the moment they get together we don't have a show anymore, and yet they have to be together because... well, they're star-crossed lovers.

TVGuide.com: Shannyn Sossamon's Coraline, she's also in the pilot's flashback. Will she fit more heavily into the mix going forward, in the present time?

O'Loughlin: Absolutely. The thing with Coraline that you need to realize is that when Mick and Coraline first met, she had it bad for him but she had been

there before — she was already a couple hundred years old — so she was able to let him go. Mick went crazy and was completely obsessed with this woman, and eventually they got married and she gave Mick this curse [by turning him into a vampire]. She thought it was the greatest gift in the world and he was like, "You've cursed me forever, you psycho bitch!" She has essentially spent the next 50 years in constant pursuit of him because he left her, so yeah, she comes back with a vengeance.

TVGuide.com: You know, as I'm watching the pilot I'm getting this vibe off of you, like you're this Russell Crowe-John Cusack kind of hybrid.

O'Loughlin: [Laughs] That's funny, man! Oh, the s--t you hear... Russell Crowe and John Cusack! I haven't heard that hybrid, that variation of beast yet. I was compared to Russell Crowe in the Australian media when I got my first lead role, in a film called *The Oyster Farmer*. I don't know how to respond to that!

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